

Sermon Notes: October 15, 2023

Focus: Wedding Feast for the rabble (Matthew 22:1-14) [Lectionary Readings](#)

In this parable there is: **Invitation:** The king represents God, and the wedding feast symbolizes the kingdom of heaven. The initial invitation is symbolic of God's mercy sent to the religious leaders.

Rejection: In response to the invitation, the leaders say, "no thanks, I would rather blow dry my cat." The context of chapters Matthew 21 and 22: Jesus and the leaders have been constantly at each other's throats. In today's parable, Jesus is hinting not-so-subtly that the leaders' indifference and hostility to him is a rejection of God's grace.

Acceptance: Frustrated at the leaders' snub, the king in the parable invites all the ne'er-do-well people from the streets and highways, symbolizing that the gospel is especially those used to rejection. It is the way Jesus rolls with sinners, prostitutes, and tax collectors.

War: The King goes to war over a snub. He goes to war with people who were too busy for a party. It is odd - but Jesus is very intentionally trying to provoke a reaction from the leaders.

Application: *I am not sure what we are to take from it* because we are not in a life and death battle with the religious elite of our day. I hope we can be inspired by the story to make no peace with casual classism, racism, and exclusion. What if the mistreatment of the poor, disabled people, and the outcast sent us into a tizzy? We could (metaphorically) go to war with the indignities of modern life.

The culture of marriage in which the parable is set:

- Held at night *Matthew 22:13, 25:6*
- Celebrated in the house of the groom *Matthew 22:1-10, John 2:9*
- Overflowing with family and friends drinking to make the wine run out *John 2:3*
- Managed by a friend who supervised the feast *John 2:9*.
- Refusing the invitation was a deep insult *as in today's story*.
- The host expected everyone to wear festive clothes. *as in today's story*.
 - People regularly showed off their status with their fancy party clothes. In today's story, the groom is giving excellent clothes to everyone - breaking down status divisions.
- Finally, a wedding is the capstone image of the last chapters of the last book of the Bible. Jesus and the saints are part of the 'the marriage supper of the Lamb' *Revelation 19:9*

The Wedding Garment today: The host casts out the guest without the right wedding garment—harsh. This garment is a gift from Jesus (the groom). We can surmise, if you get the invite, show up. If you do not take the gift of clothes, you do not get to stay. We know this kind of intuitively.

For example, I threw a party in college, and was glad that people showed, but this one dude kept trying to cut the hair of different women (don't ask me why, I still don't know), he was quickly kicked out by a wall of 'bros.' He *could* have been weird, loud, and obnoxious, but he could not collect hair. The rules of Jesus may be open and generous, but there are expectations placed upon us for us to grow in grace and kindness toward others.

Modern thoughts: I want to hear that everyone is all right exactly as they are, and that God loves us as we are. This idea is central to my understanding of priesthood. But there must be more. Jesus did not say, 'Everyone is all right as they are *forever*' Muhammad Ali said it best, "A man who views the world the same at 50 as he did at 20 has wasted 30 years of his life." I pray that we are becoming better in ways that we cannot even conceive of right now.

We do not believe that God's crowning achievement is acceptance.
We intellectually know that God loves terrible people, but we also could not endure a God who is just passively accepts bad actions. A god who does not love justice is not worth our time.

Jesus invites to the wedding feast, but we cannot tromp around the dance floor with our muddy work boots indefinitely. We can show up to the party unsure, we can even get on the dance floor and make a mess, but eventually we change into better clothes to keep the party going. Jesus hands us garment of grace. Maybe the tag is itchy at first, but it becomes a natural fit with practice.

Autobiographical thoughts I have never felt like a fit at most parties. Maybe because I left Oklahoma as soon as I could, I have always felt like a bit of wandering Aramean. I have learned an enormous amount about how to be in almost any situation and any culture, maybe because of the places I have roamed. But I never quite shake this sense that I am on the dance floor with muddy boots wherever I am. When I came to California, I was too southern for Californians – still am.

People *still* say, when they find out my Oklahoma roots that I 'speak well...' implying '...for a backwoods redneck.' Oddly, now when I go back to Texas, people make the sign of the cross when California comes up. They will say something like "how do you stand the drugs, homelessness, fire and taxes?" How could I be at home in the burning hellscape of the west coast?

Jesus is cool with my bull-at-a-wedding-feast personality because I am still open to learning. I am learning when to speak and when to listen. I am learning how to break down the petty micro divisions we create against each other. I am still dancing toward helping all people feel welcome. We have a war to wage. Let us make war: where we use God's invitation to grace as our weapon and trust that Jesus has enough wedding garments to go around.

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